CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE EIGHT HUNDRED AND NINETY-NINTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 21 March 2002, at 10.10 a.m.

President: Mr. Markku Reimaa (Finland)

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The PRESIDENT: Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, as you can see, the podium for our plenary today is somewhat unusual. But before I proceed, I declare open the 899th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

First, I would like to inform you that the secretariat has received - and I have received - from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations the following message, dated 19 March 2002: "Following consultations with the Conference on Disarmament, the Secretary-General has announced the appointment of Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, with immediate effect, as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament. In that capacity, Mr. Ordzhonikidze will also act as the Secretary-General's Personal Representative to the Conference."

I would most warmly welcome in our midst the just appointed Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, and congratulate him on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf on his appointment to this important post. I would like to assure him of our cooperation and support, and I am sure that the Conference will benefit immensely from his vast experience and his diplomatic skills. I believe that the introduction of fresh forces at this juncture is most welcome, and I hope that this appointment augurs well for our future deliberations.

Furthermore, as you see, the Conference will be addressed today by two distinguished speakers, and I welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, H.E. Mr. K. Tokaev, and it is my personal pleasure to welcome the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, His Excellency Mr. Antti Satuli. Please accept that, for this meeting at least, Finland is wearing two hats on the podium. This does not happen every week in the Conference.

The presence of our two distinguished guests with us today demonstrates the enduring commitment of their Governments to our common endeavours and, I believe, to the continued importance which they attach to the Conference.

Before giving them the floor, I should like to extend words of welcome to Ambassador Naéla Gabr of Egypt, Ambassador András Szabó of Hungary and Ambassador Ivan Mora Godoy of Cuba, who have assumed responsibilities as the representatives of their respective Governments in this Conference. We are looking forward to working with them in pursuing our common goals.

I have the pleasure to give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, His Excellency Mr. Tokaev.

Mr. TOKAEV (Kazakhstan): First of all, I would like to extend my congratulations to Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze on his appointment to this high post and to wish him every success in his difficult endeavours.

(Mr. Tokaev, Kazakhstan)

It is also a great honour for me to address this representative forum and to present the position of Kazakhstan on arms control and disarmament issues. But before that, allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you on your appointment to this post and to wish you every success.

I will not go into the details of my country's input in the disarmament sphere, since this is something of which you are all well aware. The decision of your forum to accept Kazakhstan as a full member of the Conference on Disarmament is clear evidence of this contribution. President Nursultan Nazarbaev, speaking to the participants of the international conference entitled "The Twenty-first Century: Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", held in Kazakhstan in August 2001, pointed out that NPT remains the only international agreement committing its members to undertake all measures in the nuclear disarmament area. The promotion of NPT provisions should remain a priority subject for discussions within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

Indeed, arms control, disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction are issues of extreme importance for Kazakhstan.

The events which occurred on 11 September 2001 have shown the vulnerability of global security. Among the most important elements of global strategy in the fight against terrorism are our efforts aimed at preventing terrorist organizations or non-State players from possessing weapons of mass destruction. These efforts are to be strengthened. We are strongly convinced that the international nature of contemporary threats and challenges requires multilateral efforts for their prevention.

The effect of globalization on the flows of finance and the economies of different countries and expanding access to scientific and technical information and technologies have created the possibility of virtually boundless movements by people. This process has had a strong impact on the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. The development of missile technologies and the proliferation of conventional weapons facilitate the escalation of regional conflicts, destroying global stability.

There is therefore a great necessity for a new political vision to combat new threats in the new century. We must understand that there are no alternatives to the spirit of good will and cooperation. New threats must face new, more efficient forms of action by the world community.

It is impossible to achieve security without maintaining, enforcing and universalizing the existing regimes on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. I believe that all the distinguished representatives present here will agree that international agreements require further adaptation to existing political realities. Further efforts must be carried out to universalize, develop and strengthen verification mechanisms.

The results of the NPT Review Conference in 2000 gave hope for further promotion of the nuclear non-proliferation process and the reduction of existing nuclear arsenals. 2001 was a

(Mr. Tokaev, Kazakhstan)

significant year in this regard: the inspection regime in the framework of the INF Treaty has been completed and a seven-year period of strategic offensive weapons reduction by the two largest nuclear States - Russia and the United States of America - has come to an end. The implementation of these agreements has shown that these goals can be achieved only in an atmosphere of cooperation, trust and mutual understanding. At the same time, reaching concurrence in the positions of different States and looking for compromises to honour appropriate commitments are possible only within legally binding agreements.

Meanwhile, in 2001, certain events took place which called into question the possibility of strengthening the global regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Up to now, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty - which, incidentally, is the most recent achievement of the Conference on Disarmament - has still not entered into force. We regret that those countries whose ratification of the Treaty is still required have not so far taken the appropriate legal action.

The situation related to the verification mechanism of the Biological Weapons Convention is a matter of concern for us, since this type of weapon is of great interest to terrorists. I hope that the BWC Review Conference will be able to accomplish its work in November and adopt a decision on the verification mechanism protocol.

Fortunately, the situation with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction seems better. Inspections are being conducted, documents are being presented, and existing stocks are being destroyed.

My country appreciates the role of the ABM Treaty in maintaining stability and security. We believe that, even after the United States withdrawal from the Treaty, which has led to a drastic change of its substance, some provisions of this treaty can be practically implemented in the future.

We also must understand that science is constantly developing, and its achievements cannot be confined to one national territory. The proliferation of missiles and missile technologies evidently confirms this tendency. From our point of view the appropriate activities in this direction must be pursued within the multilateral framework, with the aim of setting up a global regime for the non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies. Proposals to create an international code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation, as well as to create a global missile and missile technology control system, might become agenda items for serious discussions at the global level.

I must also draw your attention to the problem of the stockpiling of conventional weapons, which is a matter of great concern. This threatens security and stability in a number of regions of the world, including Central Asia, taking into account the present situation in Afghanistan. We appreciate the United Nations paying special attention to this issue. A result of

(Mr. Tokaev, Kazakhstan)

its long-term activity in this direction, the programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects was adopted in 2001, and Kazakhstan is ready to make every effort to ensure its implementation.

Regional security and stability are vitally important for global peace and development. In our region, in the past few years, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia has been gaining momentum. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization also looks to be an extremely promising initiative. Strengthening stability and security is at the top of the agenda of these forums.

In order to reduce armaments practically and continue the disarmament process, it is not enough to create new strategic relations between two nuclear Powers. The Conference on Disarmament, as the symbol of multilateral efforts, must articulate its firm position. Otherwise, we will find ourselves left outside the disarmament process.

As we understand, the basis of future activity of the Conference on Disarmament could be the proposals being discussed over the past two years. The member States have to exert their political will and begin focused discussions on the priorities defined in this document, to which, in principle, we all agree. In our opinion, it is necessary to commence work in parallel, conducting negotiations on some issues and beginning discussions on the possibility of pursuing negotiations on other issues. Otherwise, the Conference on Disarmament will lose its credibility and, afterwards, we will have to seek other ways of solving the relevant problems.

We are convinced of the need to use existing opportunities and not to waste time searching and creating new ones. The agreements reached during the NPT Conference in 2000 must be implemented, ensuring progress in the nuclear disarmament process.

Speaking specifically about the Conference on Disarmament, we would like to refer to the following points: first, in the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, it is necessary to begin negotiations on the FMCT, which will become an important contribution to non-proliferation and will complement the work of IAEA and CTBTO; and, second, it is necessary to start negotiations on preventing the arms race in outer space: it is vitally important to prevent the militarization of space, which could lead to unpredictable consequences.

Kazakhstan is firmly convinced that the Conference on Disarmament can and must prove its efficiency. We are ready for intensive and constructive interaction and hope that all members of the Conference will exercise flexibility and political will in order to ensure real progress in our common endeavours.

The PRESIDENT: I thank His Excellency Mr. Tokaev for his intervention, and I now give the floor to the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, His Excellency Mr. Antti Satuli.

Mr. SATULI (Finland): Mr. President, I am indeed grateful for this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament. I would like to start by associating myself with the

(Mr. Satuli, Finland)

wishes and congratulations that have already been expressed to Mr. Ordzhonikidze, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, who is now also occupying the post of the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General in this Conference.

Likewise, I would like to extend my congratulations to my colleague and friend, Ambassador Markku Reimaa, on his appointment as President of the Conference on Disarmament. Finland is taking over the presidency of this Conference for the first time at a very challenging moment. Today, more than ever, disarmament and non-proliferation should be our common endeavour.

The terrorist attacks of 11 September in the United States have changed the world in many ways. The impact of the acts of terror continues to be assessed but many analyses show that we are living in a different environment, an environment which is more insecure than it used to be.

Since the end of the cold war, it has become increasingly clear that military threats are diminishing in comparison to other kinds of threats which to not originate from national Governments but arise for various reasons, such as economic or social exclusion. The new security challenges may include a long-term, continuing deterioration of the environment and sudden environmental crises, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other contagious diseases, international crime, drugs, the disintegration of societies and refugee movements.

While the prospect of major military conflicts has become less likely, new threats include terror and violence in varying forms. They may come from quarters which have failed to build a society with respect for human rights and democratic principles. It is therefore a frightening prospect to see the spread of weapons ending up in irresponsible hands. One of the most terrifying threats is the possibility that weapons of mass destruction could be used by terrorist organizations.

After the horrible events of last autumn, work has continued - more intensively than before - to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, missile technology, and biological and chemical weapons. The capacity of existing storage facilities of dangerous material should be better controlled, gradually limited, reduced and finally destroyed.

New security challenges call for increasing international commitment and multilateral cooperation at all levels. We need to step up efforts to find common responses to global challenges. Every State sharing our common goals has a vital role to play in the fight against terrorism.

The European Union's response after the terrorist attacks of September has been strong and united, guided by the principles of the United Nations. Commitment to a multilateral approach and action will also cover arms control and non-proliferation. Fifteen member States have been working within the international coalition against terrorism. We are continuing to build on this and we are firmly committed to it.

(Mr. Satuli, Finland)

The Geneva Conference on Disarmament has reason to be proud of its achievements. Thus, the Chemical Weapons Convention opened a new era in international disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. It was the first multilaterally negotiated legal instrument to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction in an effectively verifiable manner. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was also welcomed as a historic step toward the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Conference on Disarmament plays a valuable and central role in the treatment of security and arms control issues. But for many years, it has not been able to pursue its true mission or reach its potential in negotiating arms-reduction or arms-control agreements. The Conference remains the only multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. It has an indispensable role as an existing forum, ready for use. If the Conference on Disarmament did not exist, the international community should, when necessary, have access to a similar resource. The state of affairs obtaining in the Conference on Disarmament is not representative of the whole picture of the disarmament process. The overall assessment is positive. Arms control has been one of the major achievements of international cooperation over the last decades.

Only today multilateral disarmament diplomacy seems to be encountering certain setbacks. One visible weakness is that not all States have acceded to the arms reduction agreements or adhere to their obligations. Non-compliance is one of the problems. We still believe that it is particularly important to reinforce international norms and fortify the international legal system.

Compliance with agreements to which States have voluntarily acceded is a prerequisite for the credibility of the entire arms control regime. For that reason, verification continues to pose a real challenge to modern arms control treaties. It is essential to strengthen the monitoring and enforcement provisions of the various treaties. Monitoring needs to be reliable and efficient.

Knowledge of methods of verification is the key to globally effective arms control. Verification arrangements often require good scientific knowledge and technical capability from national authorities.

We attach great importance to the cooperative measures in building capacity that are needed to implement obligations under different arms control treaties. Since 1989, Finland has trained chemical analysts from developing countries in the field of chemical warfare agents verification. Finland also supports the training activities in the framework of the CTBT.

Finland subscribes to the views expressed by the Presidency of the European Union, the Ambassador of Spain, speaking also on our behalf, at the beginning of this session. I will try not to repeat what has already been said by the European Union, but I would like to make remarks on some issues on the disarmament agenda and the work that lies ahead.

The previous visitor from Helsinki to the Conference on Disarmament, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, spoke here in 1996, one year before Finland became a full member of the Conference.

(Mr. Satuli, Finland)

At that time, expectations of completing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty were high. The aim was to bring nuclear tests to an end, finally, and to draw up a worldwide norm and a universal treaty. Today, we know what the situation is. The negotiations were completed in 1997, but the Treaty has still not come into force. As the European Union has repeatedly emphasized, we consider explicitly that expediency and the need for genuine security call for the fulfilment of the objectives expressed in 1996, and the entry into force of the Treaty - today perhaps more than ever before.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and its associated safeguards regime are the key elements of the global effort to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. Finland calls on all States to conclude additional protocol agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency, in order to strengthen the Agency's safeguards system.

In two weeks' time, a new preparatory process is going to start for the NPT Conference of 2005. Two years have passed since the previous Conference, which was deemed to be successful. The NPT is proceeding on the right track, and we hope that all parties adopt a responsible approach. The result achieved in 2000 is extremely challenging. We need a pragmatic and proactive approach in order to boost the implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to reinforce the review process. We give our full support to the Swedish Presidency of the Preparatory Committee.

In the end, it is the results that count. In terms of actual nuclear reductions, bilaterally negotiated agreements and unilateral action have, so far, produced results. It is important that future bilateral and other arrangements enhance strategic stability and promote disarmament and non-proliferation as a whole, leading to an internationally accepted regime. We hope that the continuing bilateral efforts will lead us closer to these objectives.

In this context, Finland holds the view that, following the commitments made at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, non-strategic nuclear weapons should become an integral part of arms limitation and disarmament negotiations. The international code of conduct is one of the most important goals in spinning-off the positive effects of efforts to prevent the proliferation of missiles. Finland looks forward to the adoption of the code by the end of this year.

Finland also hopes that the time provided by the suspension of the Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention for a year will be used effectively in order to form new and fresh approaches. Parties to the BWC can meanwhile reinforce the Convention by delivering full and transparent declarations and by making sure that their national legislations are in conformity with the obligations.

Measures to reduce conventional weapons have joined the list of key disarmament efforts. For example, the issue of small arms and light weapons has now been placed firmly on the international agenda - something which was not at all self-evident only six years ago, when the first United Nations panel of governmental experts began its work.

(Mr. Satuli, Finland)

One of the ways to combat the destabilizing accumulation of these weapons is to strengthen export controls at the national level, regionally and in terms of international export control regimes. Stronger export controls on these weapons as well are also necessary tools in the fight against terrorism.

The Ottawa Convention prohibiting the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines is clearly one of the major successes in the field of disarmament. Even though Finland is not yet party to the Convention, it supports an effective and global ban on anti-personnel landmines. Finland participates in the work of the European Union to promote the objectives and global implementation of the Ottawa Convention. The Government of Finland stated last year that work is continuing with a view to Finland acceding to the Convention in 2006 and destroying its anti-personnel landmines by 2010, without compromising Finland's credible defence capability.

Finland does not produce or export anti-personnel landmines. During peacetime anti-personnel landmines are kept in stockpiles. Even if Finland is not part of the humanitarian problem caused by the irresponsible use of anti-personnel landmines, we are aware that, by agreeing to this international norm, we are part of the solution.

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons has acquired some fresh impetus. The process is advancing, especially in the case of unexploded remnants of war and anti-vehicle mines.

It seems to us that there is no better proposal than the one made by Ambassador Amorim of Brazil. A fresh look at this proposal is needed, just because of the new security environment. We consider that it reflects, in the best possible way, the interests of all Conference on Disarmament parties. After all, no country needs to give up its national positions in order to start work.

The content of the Amorim proposal would make it possible to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty, a subject with which we all agree. Discussions on the prevention of an arms race in outer space and nuclear disarmament would clear the air and enable the parties involved jointly to outline the measures needed on these issues in order to attain and strengthen the appropriate international security-producing arrangements.

I can assure you that Finland is trying to do its best in guiding the work of the Conference on Disarmament towards the common goals of the international community. We rely on the good cooperation and common efforts of all partners.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Mr. Satuli, and request your indulgence for a few moments while I escort our distinguished guest from the hall.

I now have the pleasure of giving the floor to the distinguished representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Skuratovskyi.

Mr. SKURATOVSKYI (Ukraine): Mr. President, since this is the first time I take the floor during your presidency, allow me to take the opportunity to wish both you and the honourable Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, every success in your high posts and to assure you that you can always rely on the support in your endeavours of the delegation of Ukraine. I would also like to inform the Conference that the President of Ukraine has signed the law approving the ratification by the Verkhovna Rada - the Parliament of Ukraine - of the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons (Protocol IV) to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Thus, Ukraine has taken all the measures at the national level necessary to put the Protocol into force.

Having ratified Protocol IV, Ukraine has become a State Party to all the protocols annexed to the above Convention.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished representative of Ukraine for his statement. I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): Distinguished delegates, I have asked for the floor today to express my gratitude to all of you and to the President of the Conference who congratulated me on my appointment to the post of Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

Despite its current difficulties, the Conference has a long and noble history of outstanding achievements. This body is famous for producing instruments of historic dimensions which determine the future of the international community. The Conference is the embodiment of the collective wisdom of mankind and thus puts on us a great political and historical responsibility for the safety of the world.

Many of you are aware of my close association with arms control and disarmament and still I consider this appointment as a big challenge - not as a burden in addition to my position of Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, but rather as a great privilege.

I would like to thank you all for your positive reaction to the Secretary-General's proposal for my appointment. Let me assure you that in the execution of my mandate I shall rely on your diplomatic skills and experience and on your political will to further international security. For my part, I extend to you my helping hand and my full cooperation.

The PRESIDENT: I thank you very much and once again welcome you to assist us in whatever we try to do. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? If not, before closing this plenary allow me to say a few words as to how we shall jointly continue our activities. I shall continue my consultations. I am ready to meet the different regional groups so that we might be in a position to build upon what had been achieved before the Finnish presidency started this Monday.

(The President)

On the basis of what we have already done over these first four days, I am very encouraged to see that there is potential to go forward and, as I indicated in the presidential consultations on Monday afternoon, I intend to give you some possible practical elements which might be addressed in more detail when we come back after the break on 13 May.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference and the last one of the first part of the session will be held on Thursday, 28 March 2002, and I understand that we will also have the pleasure at that plenary of welcoming the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. The meeting will take place in this room at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.